



"Den Becher nehm' ich nun, dass ganz ich heut' genese!"

TRISTAN UND ISOLDE, act i.

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## The Tristan Drama.

Wem niemals Leid von Lieben kam,  
dem kam auch Lust von Liebe nie.

*Gottfried von Strassburg.*

I.

**S**ROM Death to Love, from Love back to Death, and from Death again to wider Love.—Such is the story, in a handful of words, of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*.

There is none other of his dramas to place beside it for simplicity of construction, excepting perhaps the *Flying Dutchman*, whose plot might also be summed-up in the above brief formula; but what a difference between the treatment of the earlier and that of the later work! The figure of Vanderdecken appears to be a mere shadow, when set beside his fellow seaman Tristan, and the simple maiden Senta is a sheer child by side of royal Isolde.

It is not our purpose, however, to compare these two poems of the sea, and we have merely hinted at the likeness in order to suggest one of the many links that bind the Master's dramas into one connected whole. We will therefore turn at once to consideration of the poem of *Tristan und Isolde*, first dealing with its origin.

That the story itself is of Celtic birth, and was subsequently embodied in an epic by Gottfried von Strassburg, we need scarcely remind our readers; nor need we treat of the English settings of the tale, among which that of Swinburne is without an equal; for it is to Gottfried alone that Wagner is indebted. All this has been sufficiently detailed by others; but not, we think, the birth of the *Wagnerian* tragedy. For, although the late Mr Ferdinand Praeger, in his book "Wagner as I knew him," considered that the idea of creating a music-drama on the subject of "Tristan" only presented itself to the poet-composer during Mr Praeger's own visit to Zurich in the late summer of 1857,\* his conclusion is erroneous, the drama being then already a full-grown child endowed with speech, though not as yet with song. The true history of this "birth" is easy enough to follow, upon consulting the "*Wagner-Liszt Correspondence*,"† but it is most probable that Wagner let no one but Liszt, and finally E. Devrient, into the secret of his new project until the autumn of 1857; for he told Mr Praeger (page 294 of 'Wagner as I knew him') in reply to the question "You have been composing the love-song we were speaking of yesterday, and the story is going to shape itself into a drama?"—"You are right as to the composition, but—the libretto—I will reflect," whereas we find him writing to Liszt on June 28th 1857 (misprinted "May 8th," in the English edition of the Letters): "About Tristan ABSOLUTE silence!"

The first mention we find of *Tristan* is contained in a letter to Liszt written towards the end of 1854, and curiously enough

\* Our reasons for assigning this year to the visit, in place of "1856," will be found in our review of "Wagner as I knew him."

† Translated by Dr Hueffer; H. Grevel & Co.

alluding, almost in the same breath, to Arthur Schopenhauer as having lately almost exclusively occupied Wagner's thoughts:—"His chief idea, the final negation of the desire of life, is terribly serious, but it shows the only salvation possible. To me of course that thought was not new, and, indeed, it can be conceived by no one for whom it did not pre-exist; but this philosopher was the first to place it clearly before me." The letter goes on to say that he has got as far as the sketch for the music of the second half of the last act of the *Walküre*,—significant enough in this connection,—and then comes the announcement of the birth of that child of sorrows, *Tristan*: "As I have never in life felt the real bliss of love, I must erect a monument to the most beautiful of all my dreams, in which, from beginning to end, that love shall be thoroughly satiated. I have in my head *Tristan und Isolde*, the simplest but most full-blooded musical conception. With the 'black flag' which floats at the end of it, I shall cover myself to die."

Then the idea slumbers for two years, and we hear no more of it until on the 12th July 1856 Wagner writes from Mornex (in the throes of composing *Siegfried*) "I have again two splendid subjects which I must execute. *Tristan und Isolde* you know, and after that *Der Sieg*, the most sacred, the most perfect salvation." Eight days later, he again writes: "If you put me in a good temper, I shall perhaps unpack my *Sieger* for you; but this will be extremely difficult, for although I have carried the idea about with me for a long time, the material for its embodiment has only just come to me as in a lightning-flash. To me it is most clear and definite, but not as yet fit for communication to others. Moreover you must first have digested my *Tristan*, especially its third act, with the black flag and the white. Then first will my *Sieger* become a little more intelligible to you."

It will be noticed, in passing, that Wagner has twice referred to a "black flag"; but the only allusion thereto, in the music-drama, is Tristan's question in the third act "The flag? The flag?" and Kurwenal's reply "The flag of bliss from the mast unfettered is blown" (Mr Alfred Forman's translation). What

then is this black flag, and what this white? Mr Krehbiel tells us\* that in the old legend Tristan marries "a second Isolt, called Isolt of the White Hand. Being low with a wound received in combat, Tristan sends for the first Isolt, cautioning his brother-in-law, who goes on the mission, to hoist white sails on returning if successful, black if not. Isolt of the White Hand, who is watching for the return of the ship, moved by jealousy, announces that the sails are black, and Tristan dies just as Isolt enters the chamber." It is clear, then, that Wagner had not as yet crystallised the plan of his drama into its present form, and that an episode similar to the above, though in all probability *without* the second Isolde, formed part of the original scheme.—These letters are also interesting as showing a relationship in thought between *Tristan* and the projected Buddhist drama, which lent so much of its dominant idea to the later-written *Parsifal*; a connection further established by the fact that the *black-armoured* knight was at first intended to play a part in *Tristan und Isolde*,—*Parsifal*, on his weary journey through the world, comforting the wounded, love-sick knight.

To resume the history of *Tristan's* birth: we find a brief reference to contemplated work on *Tristan* in November 1856, immediately after Liszt's visit, and again coupled with *Die Sieger*. Another on Dec. 16, 1856, when Wagner says "The only way would be to give up the *Nibelungen*, and begin a simple work such as *Tristan* instead, which would have the advantage that I could presumably dispose of it to the theatres at once." Then again in the letter of June 28th, from which we have already quoted the postscript, he writes "I have determined to finish at once *Tristan und Isolde* on a moderate scale, which will make its performance easier, and to produce it next year at Strassburg with Niemann and Madame Meyer." Twelve days later, he writes: "Eduard Devrient stayed with me for three days last week, and inaugurated my little guest-chamber. To him also I spoke of my

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\* "Studies in the Wagnerian Drama"—Osgood and McIlvaine, London,—a review of which will be found in our NOTES, in the next issue, July.

*Tristan* scheme; he highly approved of it, but was against Strassburg," proposing Carlsruhe instead. And finally we come to the completion of the poem, in a letter undated but apparently written somewhere about September '57: "B. will bring you a copy of the poem of *Tristan*, which I wrote while he was here" (or perhaps "during his absence," as Dr Hueffer has translated it, apparently taking the *An* of "*Anwesenheit*" as a misprint for *Ab*).

Thus much for the story of the birth of the *Tristan*-poem. As for the music, the First act, or more probably its *sketch* only, was finished on the last day of '57, at Zurich, and was sent to the Härtels to be engraved on April 3, 1858; the Second was completed, at Venice, in February or March '59; and the Third act, at Lucerne, the end of July or beginning of August '59. The first performance took place at Munich, with the Schnorrs in the title-rôles, on June the 10th, 1865.—

Before quitting this subject, it may interest our readers to hear that in June 1857 Wagner seriously thought of producing *Tristan* in *Brazil*! He then writes to Liszt: "I am thinking of having a good Italian translation made of this work, in order to produce it as an Italian opera at the theatre of Rio Janeiro, which will probably give my *Tannhäuser* first. I mean to dedicate it to the Emperor of Brazil,"—a dedication which was no more realised than the Brazilian production itself.

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As will be seen from one of the above extracts, *Tristan* was the first, and with the exception of *Parsifal*, the only drama written by Wagner under the influence of the Schopenhauerian philosophy; though certain changes in the closing words of Brünnhilde, in the *Götterdämmerung*, may reasonably be attributed to that influence. It is important to remember this, not so much as accounting for the line of thought displayed by the poem—for the words we have cited above prove conclusively that the fundamental idea of the system of the Frankfort sage was not new to the Zurich poet—but as indicating the manner in which we must approach the subject, to rightly understand it. From beginning to end, the

poem breathes but one refrain, the "final negation of the desire of life." And although this is the only drama of Wagner's in which that idea is brought prominently before us throughout, we may trace it back as far as the *Flying Dutchman*, with Vanderdecken's surfeit of a storm-tossed life; to *Tannhäuser*, with his sole redemption by Death; to the *Art-work of the Future* (p. 116, Vol. I. of the translations) where Wagner speaks of the "objectless and self-devouring torment of the soul, which is nothing but longing, yearning, tossing, pining—and *dying out*, i.e. dying without having assuaged itself in any 'object'; thus dying without death, and therefore everlasting falling back upon itself." Then again we find it in the redemption of the Ring by Brünnhilde's sacrifice of her own life, and Wotan's yielding-up of the last vestige of his headstrong Will; and finally in the redemption of Kundry, the counterpart of Vanderdecken, when her body falls '*entseelt*' in the temple of the Gral, and the Dove descends as though it were the spirit of the *Ewig-Weibliche*.

That this was the sense in which the Master penned his poem, will become plain by reference to pages 378-9, Vol. VI. *Gesammelte Schriften* (written at Vienna, 1862):—

"With the sketch for *Tristan und Isolde* I felt that I was not really quitting the circle of those views on mythical poetry that had been opened-up to me by my *Nibelungen* labours. The harmonious connection of all genuine Myths, which had been brought home to me by my studies, had above all quickened my sight for the marvellous variations which stand out amidst this great uncovered harmony. Such an one it was that confronted me, with a fascination past denial, in the relation of Tristan to Isolde as compared with that of Siegfried to Brünnhilde. Just as in speech, by the shifting of a tone, two apparently quite different words are often formed from one, so here by a like shifting or transposition of the Time-motiv had two seemingly different situations sprung from one and the same mythical factor. The complete equality between the two consists in this, that both Tristan and Siegfried, in bondage to an illusion which makes this deed of theirs unfree, woo for another man their own predestined bride, and in the false-relation herefrom arising find their doom. While the poet of "Siegfried," in his endeavour before all else to preserve the vast connection of the whole Nibelung-myth, could only keep in view the downfall of the hero through the vengeance of the wife who at like time offered up herself and him, the poet of "Tristan" finds his staple matter in the portrayal of the love-torments to which the lovers, awakened to their situation, fall victims till their death. Here, that is only more fully and clearly

worked-out which even in the former case was given unmistakable utterance : Death through stress of Love ; an idea which found expression in Brünnhilde, for her part conscious of the true relation. What in the *Ring* could only come to rapid utterance in the climax, becomes in *Tristan* the subject of a many-sided exposition ; and it was *this* that formed my incentive to treat the story at that precise period, to wit as a supplementary Act of the great Nibelung-myth, a myth that compasses the wide relations of a world."

We also find Wagner dwelling on this Schopenhauerian idea in his "*Zukunftsmusik*" (Vol. VII. of the *Ges. Schr.* pages 163-4) written in Paris, September 1860. After treating of *Lohengrin* and Elsa's question "Whence?" , he says :—

"I, too, felt driven to ask this *Whence* and *Wherefore*, and in my search was long-time banished from the magic realm of art. But my spell of chastisement taught me at last to overcome the question. All doubt was lifted from me, when I yielded up myself to "*Tristan*." Here, in perfect trustfulness, I plunged myself into the depths of the inner workings of the soul, and fearlessly constructed from this inmost centre of the world its outer form. A glance at the *volumen* of this poem will show you at once that the same precision of detail which the poet of a historical subject is forced to bestow upon the elucidation of the outward circumstance, to the detriment of the clear portrayal of its inward motives, I confidently applied to these latter alone. Life and Death, the whole meaning and existence of the outer world, here hang upon the inner promptings of the soul. The entire movement of the plot is only brought about by reason that the inmost soul demands it ; and just as it is framed beforehand in the inner shrine, so and such does it come to light of day."

After reading these extracts, it is impossible to doubt of the deep meaning that Wagner intended to infuse into his poem, a work that seems the apotheosis of the philosophy of Schopenhauer. And thus, if in the following lines we view the drama as far more than the history of a pair of lovers, we may claim the author as the sponsor of our exposition.—

In his *Guide to Tristan und Isolde*, Hans von Wolzogen has pointed out the origin of the old Saga in those Northern myths that deal with the central idea of Light and Darkness, Day and Night, the wooing of the Earth by the Sun-god and his death at the hand of Winter. Thus it is that, even before the drama begins, the hero Tristan has sped westwards like the Sun, and, bathed in blood, has laid down his head to sleep behind the curtain of the sea ; as symbolised by the first words uttered in the drama,

—the “Young Sailor” commencing his song with: “Westward sweeps my sight.”\* The whole trend of the drama is toward the setting sun, and even this light-hearted sailor-youth must unconsciously tell us that, though “eastward slides the ship,” it is not toward the sunrise, nor the high noon of glittering life that go forth the hearts of its freight. Touches like this, so delicate as often to escape us, one is accustomed to suddenly discover in these marvellous creations of the Bayreuth master; he cannot stay the action of his drama to point them out and worry them to death, but there stands the indication for those who run to read; and thus it is that we find the study of his poems so absorbing in its interest. Had we not in *Tannhäuser* the young goatherd singing, in his innocence, of Dame Holda tripping through the woods; when Venus-Holda had but newly released her knight from the cloying pleasures of her court? At the very moment when the emotions—as here in the musical Prelude—have reached a climax from which it is perilous to attempt descent, we have a repetition of the feeling in a brighter key, and find relief in a contrast that is yet akin. With a striking parallelism, also, to the opening scene of the *Flying Dutchman*, the sailor sings on: “My Irish maid, where stayest thou?”, and sends us a foreboding of the hero’s thoughts. Tristan must not avow his love, but it echoes from the tender words of his vassal; for Tristan, too, is pondering on the days when, wounded unto death, an “Irish maid” Isolde tended him, and “with balsam-sap the hurt that so hard beset him her hand was swift to soothe.” Whither, he asks himself, has fled that gentle maid, whom the discovery of his true estate changed into the proud princess he now is bearing home to be another’s bride?

But the key-note struck so lightly soon gathers round it the sounds of scorn and vengeance. Isolde wrests another meaning from the song; her ears can hear nothing therein but the tale of a woman’s heart stolen in the name of pity, and cast aside without a word. She knows naught of Tristan’s humble sacrifice of self, of

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\* Mr Alfred Forman’s translation, which will be followed throughout this essay.

his dread to dare ask so rare a jewel for his own ; for no words of love have ever passed between the twain,—nothing but a “glance.” It is for their blindness to this glance, their refusal to interpret the unspoken word, that their doom has gone forth. An old, old tale : Elsa who could not accept Lohengrin without the uttered question ; Tannhäuser who could not read Elisabeth’s love, until he had learnt it from Wolfram ; Parsifal who was mute in the presence of Amfortas’ sufferings. An old, old tale ! told by all the poets of all time, but never told so poignantly as now.

Yet Isolde is still dreaming of those days of hope now dead, for she has scarcely uttered the words : “ Who thus can have mocked me ? ” when she gazes vacantly around her, and asks : “ Brangäne, thou ? — Say, where are we ? ” —as though but just awakened from a trance. “ To land ? What land ? ” Her land has been “ the wonder-realm of night,” the land to which her thoughts go ever back, the realm whereof she says when Tristan bids her follow, after Melot’s fatal blow : “ How should I shun the land by which the world is spanned ? ” This land of the setting sun, from which she sprang, is the home of mystery and magic ; her mother, like another Empress of the Night, is mistress of those secret arts that hold the elements within their sway, the night whose colder airs sweep down upon the surface of the waters and rouse them into fury. And thus Isolde bids the breezes “ drive from its *dreams* this slumbering sea ; bid it behold the booty I bring it.” For the dreams that had kept her “ tearless ” when borne away upon this journey, when “ on board they brought her dazed and blind,” —“ *eine Braut als Leiche*,” —are passing now away, into the death-resolve. As she had once saved Tristan from the jaws of death, and earned the forfeit of his life, she will claim it now and pledge it with her own !

Thus we find the first scene acting as a prologue to the whole drama ; the love-song of the sailor, the faithful solicitude of the companion, the bride in *living death* ; —for although we have taken “ *eine Braut als Leiche* ” from Isolde’s outburst in the immediately succeeding scene, its sense is the same as the present words of

Brangäne. And hére we must leave our characters standing for the nonce, before they hurry us along with them into the action of the play.

## Parisian Amusements.

(From the German of Richard Wagner. Continued from page 29.)

**S**OR the rest, Halévy's work has marvellously held its own. Although the mass of brilliant products of the newer French school, owing to a too rapid and exhausting blossoming, have already lost the glamour of their brilliance,—although we may see even Meyerbeer's eternal "Robert" appearing now in quite washed-out and almost colourless trappings: yet the great costume, ballet, and scenery-show, *La Juive*, seems determined to keep its dresses ever fresh. Any one who has only seen this opera in Germany, certainly cannot comprehend how it ever commenced to amuse the Parisians. The riddle is solved at once, so soon as one sees the Paris curtains go up. Where we in Germany grew enthusiastic over the powerful features of the composition, the Parisian has quite other fish to fry. For what a length of time have not the French scene-painter and machinist known how to strain and busy the curiosity and attention of the opera public! In truth, he who beholds this *inscenario* needs long and close examination before he can exhaust the thousand details of the mounting. Who can take-in the strange and lavish costumes at one glance? Who can grasp at once the mystic meaning of the ballets?—But indeed it requires all these attractions, to disclose in time to the Parisians the intrinsic worth of an original creation; for I tell you, before all else they demand to be amused,—by hook or crook amused.

Unfortunately however, their poets and composers, also, desire to amuse themselves betimes. The order of the day in Paris is to 'make a hit,' and thenceforth be a 'made man' with dividends and credit! In reason, ought one to take it ill, that those who at last

attain this grand success should afterwards bethink them of amusements? Know ye what it means, to gain this success? It means, to have consumed the most robust, the fairest years of an artist's life, in want, in cares, in toils, in suffering and hunger. Ye only know these people *after* they have conquered; but can ye imagine to yourselves the physical exhaustion which paved the way to their final triumph? Verily, if one has a vestige of humanity, one cannot grudge them rest when they have reached their goal; and this rest means for the Parisians—Amusement. When this grand success, whose struggles have consumed their youth and blanched their cheeks, is reached at last: hey presto! everything puts on a different face; the artist becomes a capitalist, the stoic an epicurean.

Look at Dumas and Auber. What sort of occupation is theirs now?—They are bankers, frequenting the Bourse, and boring themselves to death with their own operas and pieces. The one keeps mistresses, the other horses. If they need a little money, they take the well-oiled scissors of their talent, and cut-off a piece or an opera from the gilt-edged security of their renown, just like any other capitalist cuts-off his darling coupons; they send it to the theatre, instead of to the bank,—and go and amuse themselves.

The bright particular star of this hemisphere is decidedly, just now, the mighty Scribe. I really ought not to speak of him except in inspired verse; or, at the least, it is my duty to address to him a hymn, as to the godlike Rubini. This hymn would then begin somewhat thus: "To Thee, high God of pen and ink, creative Genius without an equal, Autocrat of all the theatres of Paris, Man of the exhaustless rents, Ideal of productive force in weekly numbers; to Thee resound my low-obeisant lay!"

But as I should have to repeat the phrase a hundred times, in order to accent a countless host of inomissible appellatives, I will spare my readers a continuance of the hymn, for fear of wearying them. I crave permission, however, to express at least in prose my admiration and awe-struck veneration for the mighty man!

You all know who Scribe is; his 'collected works' have appeared, and no one, therefore, can any longer doubt but that he is a great poet. But he is still more: he is the epitome of the art of amusing, and has gained the most surprising credit for the establishment over which he presides with such exemplary diligence. His establishment is—the bulk of the Parisian theatres. In this household he receives Paris every evening, and has the knack of entertaining each person in the way the latter most desires. The gorgeous dame and world-shaking magnate, he welcomes in his salon—the Grand Opera; for the intriguing diplomat, he unlocks his library—the *Théâtre Français*; the smaller music-room—the *Opéra Comique*—he opens to the bourgeoisie, so exacting in its demands; the conversation-chamber—of the *Vaudeville*—to the talkative tradesman; aye, affably he conducts the grisette and the gamin, close by his study—to the *Gymnase* and the *Ambigu Comique*. Look you! what an extensive mansion; and what is most marvellous of all: you will find him everywhere, everywhere entertaining, everywhere up to his eyes in amusing!

It is astounding! Are you losing your heads?—Nay, see how cool the great man keeps his own! With amiable dignity he hastens from one to the other; asks what they lack, with the best waiter at a restaurant; serves it tidily and promptly, and pockets modestly the little 'tip' which is assured him in the glittering *lantièmes*.

Despite this captivating, easy grace in the bearing of the man, would you not be tempted to expect that, after the exertions of such a social evening, he should be utterly fatigued on the next day?—Go and visit him at ten o'clock in the morning, and you will be astonished! You see him in a most elegant silk dressing-gown, with a cup of chocolate beside him. He certainly deserves this light refreshment; for he has but this moment left his work-table, where for two whole hours he has been flogging his Hippogriff in headlong galop through that romantic fairyland which smiling greets you from the great poet's works. But think you that he is really resting, with that chocolate? Look around, and

you observe that every corner of the tasteful room, each chair, divan and sofa, is occupied by a Paris author or composer. With every one of these gentlemen he is engaged in weighty business, such as with other people would not brook a moment's interruption ; with every one of them he is hatching the plot for a drama, an opera, a comedy, or a vaudeville ; with every one of them he is concocting a brand-new intrigue. With this person, he is knitting an indissoluble knot ; with that, he is on the point of unravelling the most ingenious confusion ; with one, he is reckoning up the effect of some hair-bristling situation in a new opera ; with another, he has just two seconds ago come to terms about a double-wedding. Further, he is at the same time busied with a host of charming *billets* to this and that fair client ; with polishing-off this or that applicant by word of mouth ; and with paying five-hundred francs for a baby dog. But amidst it all he collects material for his coming play, studying with a fleeting smile the physiognomies of the guests announced or just despatched, and framing them into a picture from which, in fifteen minutes, he completes a play of which no one knows a word as yet.—I rather fancy that I myself one day became a subject for him in this wise, and I should not be much surprised if we soon saw a piece in which my plaintive wonder at the costly purchase of the puppy was made the pivot of an important situation.

Now that you have seen him, you can form some sort of notion as to what Scribe is ! When he dies, an extraordinary piece of routine will die with him, for no one else will be able to follow in his footsteps. His art will cease, like the Napoleonic sway : thousands combined would not have wit to seize each separate thread that the mighty despot holds so surely in one hand.

Indisputably, Scribe has ably plied his trade ; he is the prime condition of all fortune, all renown, all success, all honour, all receipts—especially for composers. He who should write an opera without his aid, would rush upon a certain doom ; and if any one has gone so far astray as to set music to the 'book' of another

author, he as a rule endeavours to at least make good his mistake by humbly praying Scribe to put his name above that of the peccant author, and in recompense to be so obliging as to take half the *droits d'auteur*. As a rule he does so.

Without Scribe, no opera, no play—no real Amusement. And do you imagine, forsooth, that he draws no profit from all this? Oh, he is the luckiest of mortals! He takes payment for the successes which others have fought out; and although every one is of opinion that, for instance, the music of "Robert" is worth more than the text, still every one knows that Scribe draws more from this opera than Meyerbeer.

Yet, let us not pry into the dark corners of this great palace of delight! Let us not lift the veil of so many a wondrous mystery which the Gods so graciously bedeck with sparkling bliss! A glance into the garden of the Tuileries, or any concert-room, and every sad suspicion will soon be scared to flight. We nowhere stumble there on misfortune or unhappiness; nothing but well-dressed and comfortable people; for you must know that to shabby, miserable folk the entry is forbidden. And quite right too: for Parisian joys and elegant toilettes are one and the same thing; and where this harmony is disturbed, there necessarily crop-up contrast, conflict, and lastly revolution. To avoid such disasters and keep the elegant world as much and as exclusively together as possible, to smother it with pleasures and thus to chain it ever closer to the amusing consuetude of the existing state of things, is therefore a first maxim of the present government. To this end Louis Philippe has thought it indispensable to arrange, by a secret ordinance, for as many concerts, matinées, and soirées as there are hours in the day. Before I arrived by a process of induction at the discovery of this most hidden and hallowed cause, I could not find the slightest explanation of that vast phenomenon; for the result of all this entertainment is most fatiguing to the public.

You shall now hear of what a Parisian concert consists: but you will not require a special programme, for it is always the same thing arranged the same way. Only you must take notice that,

broadly speaking, these concerts divide themselves into three orders of merit, depending on the status of the singers who take part therein. Let us begin with the lowest, or third class.

These are generally got-up by those unfortunate beings who come to Paris with the idea that they are going to carry everything before them, but as a rule content themselves with an *au cinquième* in the Faubourg St Denis or St Martin. For the most part they are pianoforte-marvels, young people from twelve to forty years old who have applied themselves with much diligence to the Paris curriculum, and have built all the hopes of a year upon their concert. The singers at these concerts are generally 'second-prizes' of the Conservatoire, scarcely worth the naming, and Mons. Boulanger, a drawing-room tenor scarcely worth consideration. The songs are: "*Robert, mon âme!*"\* and romances by Demoiselle Puget; the audience has free tickets, is unassuming, and amuses itself.

In the second class we rank those concerts which are given by the standing army of teachers. These teachers are everyday professors of the pianoforte, of tolerable education; they are composers of the Fantasies-brillantes, the Mosaïques, and the *Airs-variés*, which follow in the wake of every new opera. They are usually *spirituel*, and give good lessons. Here one hears Mme. Nau and the Dorus-Gras; very much worth naming; Dupont and Alizard, quite worth considering. They sing: "*Robert, mon âme!*" and Romances by Demoiselle Puget. The audience consists of young-lady pupils and their relations, pays for its tickets, instructs and amuses itself.

The first rank is taken by the concerts of virtuosi of renown; their arrival in Paris is usually announced in the musical journals; every one dubs them "celebrities," and they give themselves airs accordingly. They play, some on the pianoforte, some on the violin, and as a rule are received in state. In *their* concerts one hears: the Dorus-Gras and the Garcia-Viardot, distinguished! Masset and Roger, magnificent! One sings: "*Robert, mon âme!*"

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\* "*Robert, toi que j'aime!*" from Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable*.—Tr.

and Romances by Demoiselle Puget. The audience has 'made a queue,' goes into raptures, and amuses itself.

As, however, there are always certain things too lofty for any kind of classification, so are there certain concerts here which even stand above those of the first rank. These are customarily described by the papers as "the finest and most brilliant of the year," and are given either for some noted charity, or by the proprietors of one of the musical journals. In these is amassed all that Paris has of attractive and entrancing; and, to seal them with the *ne plus ultra* of distinction, the whole of the Italians lend their voices. There a perfect whirlwind blows from eagerness to full delight, and midst satiety of delights one starves from very ennui. There, besides "*Robert, mon âme!*", one also hears the quite-the-latest airs from Rossini's *Donna del Lago*; one prodigy hustles the other from the crimson-carpeted stairway, one virtuoso snatches from the other the fiddle or piano; the storm of applause which sped the parting singer rolls over into that which greets the new arrival; "all men become brothers"; until at last one can neither hear the singing nor the playing. Moreover, one must not forget to observe that the elegance of the public at these concerts is screwed up to its highest pitch; for when the *Italians* sing, silk and satin are the vulgarest of wear, patchouli and 'portugal' the most ordinary of perfumes. In the journals, next day, these high assemblies are called, in apogee of rapture, "more aristocratic than the most aristocratic," and to Russian Princesses is accorded the *place d'honneur*.

You see, in what a brilliant sphere the virtuoso lives; to be sure, even here the world of singers takes front place, but none the less it holds the hand of friendship out to greet the virtuoso. The singers shine at the head of the list of concert-givers, and the fête itself is christened after them. As a rule, the Paris virtuoso wears his hair long, and assiduously cultivates a beard; this is of great importance, both tokens serving to distinguish him from the singer, who generally affects a fantastic cockneydom of dress.

Of the greatest significance are the apparition and functions of the virtuoso in the salons of the higher world; for he is commonly the only male professional there. The salon-singers generally consist of dilettants—or, more correctly, dilettantesses, of whom there is a shoal; for it seems to every dame so easy to dilettise in song. They mostly sing Romances by Dlle. Puget. They betray, however, a most touching bias toward devoutness, inasmuch as they adore singing religious pieces such as: little Ave-Marias, or *à la Vierge*—in downright French—in two, three, or preferably *one-part* choruses. In fact, the salon often thus becomes a praying-hall; and this penchant is generally so deep and sincere, that people rigidly abstain from any earthly pleasure, such as tea or light refreshments. Whosoever, therefore, enters such a salon with earthly thoughts or crude desires, will usually find himself compelled to practise mournful self-denial; his whole surroundings force him toward the pleasures of a higher sphere. But indeed this pious chant produces quite an electrifying impression, since, as a rule, it makes itself heard when the hubbub is at its very highest, when the fearful crush of the salon guests has tied itself into an inextricable knot, when the heat is at the level of the Lybian desert's: then there suddenly arises this fervent prayer to the Virgin, offered up by unseen dilettante; for, beyond the front row, no mortal present can see them for the suffocating throng. The effect is mostly indescribable, when those dulcet one or two-voiced chords float in soft contrition above the down-bent heads of manhood in the agony of death. Many an one will then unloose him from the knot and flee outside, to confide to the silent street his resolution to become a better man. Those left behind, more hardened sinners, require a further revelation, and therefore resignedly await a Romance of Demoiselle Puget's; when this has been delivered, again a large detachment usually retires into itself, and out of doors. To the rest the virtuoso ministers.

I, too, have been numbered in this "rest": I can no more!—  
—Who, if he be not a Parisian born, could longer bear this load

of pleasure and Amusement! For believe me, I have still kept back a great deal from you; I have not spoken of this and that, which belongs to the Parisian's enjoyment as bread to your house-keeping. Still, everything has its bounds, and a man who has no country-seat wherein to rest and recover from the pleasures of a Paris Summer, must necessarily abstain from a large portion thereof: such as, balls, Dlle. Rachel, the Bois de Boulogne, and so on. One single Civil-list ball is quite enough to ruin for life a poor foreigner of modest capacity for enjoyment; would you therefore have me tell you, forsooth, of the Opera balls with their quadrilles and galops of Inferno? Only a Frenchman can report on these, for a Frenchman alone is in the position to enjoy those things that we can only marvel at.

Now surely every one, who has followed with sufficient acumen my logical inferences, will admit the justice of my theorem: that the Parisians need no Carneval. Did I not think that this Carneval was about to be indued with some mysterious religious meaning, and did I not hold that any approach to religion is beneficial to the character of the French, I should—considering that I may boast of standing very well with Louis Philippe, and that he often allows me a candid expression of my opinion—I should beg the king, in all seriousness, to chase the dying Carneval from the streets for good.—As I have said and shown, there is no manner of dearth of other Amusements; and he who has his country-seat behind him, may sip them to his heart's content. So provide yourselves with country-seats, should you think of coming to Paris!—



## Richard Wagner as Man.

By C. F. Glasenapp.\*

Comme toutes les natures spontanées et vigoureuses, il avait le fond joyeux.

C<sup>TE</sup> FOURCAUD.

WAGNER'S personality has already, in the few years since his decease, become the subject of manifold disquisitions and reminiscences, in every civilised tongue. Although these may seem but the first stammering attempts at articulation, yet they have brought to light many a significant fact and many a deeply moving trait. In these reminiscences we come across the blithest anecdotes and jests, often pointedly directed against what the contemporary world conceives worth admiration: on the other hand, we often meet with an inclination to round off rugged corners, to preserve only such features as in no wise give an adequate picture of a personality at every moment marked and individual; whereby it not seldom happens that, through a blundering and inaccurate transmission, the brilliance is brushed off the wings of the pregnant saying, the witty figure of speech, the brief expression summing-up a whole broad category. So harmless in his mirth would the world have gladly seen that master who, of his innermost necessity, was forced to show to it his sterner side.

The source of his mirthfulness, how deep soever the need thereof lay rooted in his soul, was simply this: the consciousness of having fathomed for himself the *true nature of the things of this world*. Thus when from time to time, often unexpectedly and without transition, there broke forth from the merriest conceit that deep and mastering earnestness which fired his eye, lit up his brow, and sent its low vibrations thrilling through his voice,

\* The substance of this sketch was originally contributed to the *Bayreuther Taschenbuch* for 1886, and subsequently developed in a lecture delivered at Riga in the spring of 1890.

then his every hearer felt that he was entering no new and alien element; just as, on the alternate path, he loved to return from the solemn tone of serious speech, with some light sally, to the channel of the passing incident. He loved no human being "who could not laugh": such men were odious and oppressive to him; but it scarcely needs my assurance, that for him such men alone existed as knew and sought for something different from the narrow circle of the pleasures of our modern capitals.

There is something *sui generis*, in the "mirth" of Richard Wagner. "You talk too much about my courage; wish me rather *mirthfulness*" (*Heiterkeit*), he once said to me in those wonderful times of the fashioning of *Parsifal*; the quiet for which he had bought by the arduous and sacrificing toil entailed upon him by the deficit accruing from the first *Festspiel*, when he was compelled to give over to the theatres his *Nibelungen*, and to relinquish all present hopes of a repetition of that masterpiece in the very house he had erected for it. "Wish me rather a merry heart;"—how much do those words convey to us, coming from the mouth of one who has taught us that the artist cannot create except his inner soul be filled with a hidden joy!—The philosopher speaks of the sensitiveness of genius, as one of the most essential attributes of a high vitality of the nervous system, together with its characteristic passionateness of will, its violence of emotion, the rapid changes in its mood, and the predominance of melancholy; but he tells us also of the inward *happiness* of the man of genius, a happiness approached by nothing in the life of ordinary mankind. "The so constantly noticed gloomy mood of highly-gifted minds," says Schopenhauer, "has its image in Mont Blanc, whose summit mostly is enwrapped in clouds: but when for a moment, as at the break of day, the cloud-veil rends and now the mountain, red with sunlight, looks down from the height of heaven across the clouds to Chamounix, then comes the time when the depths of every heart leap up to greet it." And again: "When we gaze upwards to some great man of earlier days, we do not think: How happy he is, to be still the

wonder of us all; but: How happy must he have been in the direct enjoyment of a mind whose legacy has fed succeeding centuries!" We get a hint of such a moment of parting of the cloud-veil, when we meet in the "*Nachlassband*"\* these hastily jotted words, referring to the *Art-work of the Future*: "To have dreamt, envisaged, willed, the possible: 'It might be.'—Enough! To what purpose the possession? That vanishes!" Or that earlier jotting, from the Paris time of bitter hardship, 1841: "Happy the genius that Fortune ne'er has smiled on! It holds a store so passing rich within: what more could Fortune bring it?" Or, again, the song of Hans Sachs, with its serene and blissful resignation: "Yet when to Heaven soars mine eye, the Earth beneath my foot doth lie."—

Above all the contrasts of Wagner's temperament, rises victorious the liberating elemental force of his creative power, and the contentment that, welling thence, holds body and soul together. The more creation, the more liberation. If, then, we compare the incredible *power*, *fulness*, and *volume* of Wagner's creations with that which other men of "Genius" have left us, this comparison itself will explain to us why he must, by his very *nature*, have needs been lifted above all melancholy into the free æther of purest gladness.\* Its lack was caused him for the most part only by external hindrances; melancholy by obstacles that seemed wellnigh insurmountable. We are here reminded of that passage in the *Nachlassband* (p. 65-6): "Where longing is not present, there is lifelessness; where the fulfilment of longing is made unnaturally arduous, i.e. where *energy is hindered*, there is suffering;—where longing is totally denied fruition, there is death."

Unbending love of truth was the basis, gladness of heart the mainspring of his being. And how well he knew to be merry, carrying away his hearers by his sparkling geniality and inexhaustible wit! How inventive was this Gladness in its improvise

\* "*Entwürfe, Fragmente, Gedanken*": a posthumous collection of apothegms and notes.—Tr.

\* *Heiterkeit*, a word as untranslatable as its opposite, the French *ennui*.—Tr.

and unexpected outbreaks! According to his own words he was driven "by the primal force of Gladness, and in order to regain this force in all its purity" to that utterance of dissent which "in face of Modern Life could only proclaim itself as *yearning*, as *rebellion* at the last, and thus in tragic guise." How had he from of aye to combat, in order to preserve that mainspring without which he could do nothing, to win it back afresh when it threatened to elude his grasp! Ever hovering between two worlds, the world within him, and that world outside to conquer which, and mould it into keeping with the inner, was so untold hard a task, albeit he ever took up the fight again and with ever strengthened force! Glad *within*, and formed and called to gladden others: *without*, assailed and hemmed-in by a world of folly that "denied both breath and air to breathe in" to art-work as to artist!

The Gladness of Wagner has its *history*; whosoever should seek to relate it, would undoubtedly light upon the history of his life. He would have to begin with the unruffled gaiety of the child, and accompany the nascent artist through his years of youth and adolescence until that moment when, with the entry of the contrast between his conscious will and the art-conditions of the time, the first combats, cares, and hindrances announced themselves. Let us, however, begin the history of Wagner's joyousness of heart on the other side of that line where it had uttered itself in *Tannhäuser* as "Yearning," in *Wieland* as "Revolt." Let us begin from that point where with one violent thrust he had cast behind his cramping thralldom, and now once more, in his own words, felt "free, hale and hearty." Only with the feeling of such freedom, such buoyancy, could he conceive that vastest of his works, the *Ring des Nibelungen*. "My head is full of the most daring, the most joyous of artistic plans," he wrote his friends, with the first news of the scheme of his trilogy. Might he not dare hope impart to his coevals this joy in his unheard-of venture? "With my work alone, will you see me again,"—thus concludes the first summons to assist him in realising his stupendous plan. He *hoped* then, and was glad at heart; how else could he dream

of carrying out his work? He hoped because, mid exile and dire want, he felt within himself such force, such an ardour of joy, that boded of its future lighting up in others; first those who stood around him, then those at farther distance. He hoped, and set about his task; and when he had finished a portion thereof, when he had lain on one side a weighty score, he looked out upon the "world of actuality," upon the garish daylight there outside, that "gruesome Day of German Opera, with its Kapellmeisters, its tenors, its prima-donnas, and its agonising repertoires." Then he could but laugh out loud, and ridicule the "crack-brained trade" that he was plying; until the "absurdest mirth" gave place to deep depression, but to no redeeming gladness. "If I consider the actuality, I shall never be ready," wrote he, soon after the completion of the *Rheingold* music, "for then I could weep the whole day long. The absurdest mirth comes often over me, in the same breath with the most murderous sadness."

It was this world of outer actuality that was to blame that the gigantic work—which had just risen in all its beauty and grandeur upon his inner soul, and cried from its every fibre for a hearing—was delayed in taking on a scenic body for two-and-twenty painful years. But hoping on, he worked on at his task, so long as ever hope was possible; until, when halfway through his *Siegfried*, he adjourned his undertaking to the limbo of the future,—perhaps, for all he knew, for ever. "I have led my young Siegfried," he writes to Liszt, "to a peaceful forest solitude; there I have left him under the linden-tree, and bade him farewell with bitter tears:—he will rest there more at ease than elsewhere. If ever I am to resume this work, either it must be made very smooth for me, or I myself must by that time have made it possible for me to, in the fullest sense of the word, *give* it to the world."

He turned to his *Tristan*, the child-of-sorrows born from the midnight of his inner soul, a night no longer lit by any gladness; and therewith to the "garish day" of possibility of performance. One deep cry of yearning, is this whole work; yet as though the cry of one who no longer yearns for Life, but now for Death

alone! And yet he must live, though it be but an artificial life: "as I now can only lead an artificial life, so must I do everything to keep myself artificially erect." The impulse, in the loneliness of his domestic hearth, to procure himself that pleasure which could have been bestowed alone by loving understanding, he jestingly describes as "joy in luxury." But he adds: "he who can fathom what it has to take the place of, will certainly deem me easily contented."—His new work was to be easier of performance, and to help him out of his "artificial life" into a more natural contact with the vital element of his art; instead thereof it was judged, when finished, inexecutable! Was he still to hope? Who gave him gladness enough to merely *live* on?

Ever gloomier becomes his outward lot; the longing for liberation from a life sans love, sans understanding, obtains the upper hand. Taking violent flight from the terrible revulsion of his inner soul, he conceives the *Meistersinger*. In Paris are penned the verses; the musical setting accompanies him to the changeful haltingplaces of his complete external home- and help-lessness; to Vienna, to Bieberich on the Rhine, and back to Vienna again. He could not—thus!—complete it. "Do you believe me, that my desire for death is deep and sincere?" he writes to a sympathetic friend. He saw himself, bereft of hope and of all power of gladness, in that situation where others despair of life itself. But on the other hand, there is ripening within him a higher, long prepared-for lesson. The lesson that his own suffering is but a portion of the latent suffering of the world; a lesson that shows him this actual world in all its fearsome earnestness; a lesson that never reaches the consciousness of the "everyday mind," in its dull-witted helter-skelter. "The ordinary naïve man, when by some unwonted turn of fate this appalling earnestness is suddenly revealed to him, falls into such consternation that suicide is commonly the result. The man whose mental stature is greater than the ordinary, finds himself on every day to some measure in such plight. From the result aforesaid he is protected by the profound earnestness of that inner glimpse into the essence of

the world which has become the standard of his every thought: each moment bends his gaze upon the terrible phenomenon. He is also armed with gentleness and patience, that permit him not to fall into swift turmoil at the perchance unboded stroke of evil tide." Thus speaks Wagner, and from his own experience. With these words he lays bare that knowledge which had become for him a religious intuition.

The fortunes of the artist Wagner had been inseparable from those of the *man*; and, in the midst of his sorest sufferings, his human lot once more attained those heights on which there opened up for him a fountain of fresh and stanchless "gladness." *It* helped him to complete the *Meistersinger*; to lay the coping-stone, after eleven years of interruption, on the giant building of his *Nibelungen*. From *its* heart arose, for all the scorn and unbelief of the outer world of "actuality," that 'strong defence' upon the Bayreuth hill; an actuality of other and of higher kind. From *it* was Parsifal created.—For when a king had taken the fugitive into his protecting favour; when *Love*, so passionately longed-for, had blessed him with its healing care; when, in the late evening of his life, he stood no longer lonely, but surrounded by a circle of beloved beings; when to him was given a son, whom he might leave behind him as the defender, guardian, and executor of his great legacy, while spared the sorrows he himself had overcome,—then had that hard-fought joyousness of heart obtained fresh, stable ground.

This is the *history* of Wagner's "*Heiterkeit*," and therefore may we call it the joyousness of "victory."

Wagner's letters from this tardy turning in his life show clearly enough his inner attitude thereto. Looking back upon the many humiliations and deep insults that had preceded that wonderful event of the year 1864, he said: "I felt that, since it had been possible for me to bear this and yet to retain some fund of kindly feeling, I must indeed have been preserved for higher things. Like a lightning-flash, the thought pierced through me, that now the curtain would suddenly rise and reveal to me some

miracle of happiness." "I cannot conceive how I could have survived through it all, had there not lain at the bottom of my heart a consciousness as though my unheard sufferings had won me at least a *right* to some higher import."—The victory, that at last was ushered-in outside, and truly bore with it a host of undreamt pangs and struggles or ever it could lead to the fulness of artistic deed,—this "victory" was already won *within his heart*.

However, *that* it was at last, and at so advanced an hour of life, won outside too,—this affords us to all time a rarest lesson on the nature and capacity of genius. Had Wagner's elemental life-force broken down beneath the excess of outside pressure, and thus cut prematurely short his life, however inwardly victorious, before that point where—"in the summerland of royal grace" and beneath the fostering rays of a woman's love and offering—it actually *began afresh*: then we could have formed no judgment of his capacity to build up, in the blest and blessing sanctuary of his home, that happy island which none could tread without taking from it gladdening memories for all his life. We should have had to rest content with a fresh and deeply moving instance of a great spirit cast upon the world without a shelter. But now we may witness the creative force of a genius's great heart at work upon the direct *modelling of life*. In their essentials, there is here no shifting of the tragic relations of genius to its contemporary world; for the latter had naught in common with that solitary new world of Tribschen and of Wahnfried. But all the charm of this retired homelife of a great man, mid which he delved and planted, sowed and reaped,—it points to us the possibility of that "happiness without alloy" which comes of greatness and goodness of heart. Those who, as friends and servitors, as pupils and disciples, were privileged to approach his "home," to tarry in it, can tell of that in no uncertain tongue.

For this creation Wagner was equipped by that inborn *goodness of heart* which rings from every note of *Parsifal*. "Where this is present," says Schopenhauer, "it makes the heart so wide

that it embraces the whole world, so that everything now is contained in it, and nothing is left to lie outside: it also lends thereto that boundless regard for others, which else is only practised by each man upon himself." "Such a man," continues the philosopher "is not capable of rage." And yet it is just the flaming wrath of Wagner, when dealing with the abuses of modern civilisation, in state, church, society, culture, and science, that clothes him with the garment of a Michael Angelo's world-judge. But never have the odious onslaughts of his "opponents," or that deadliest poison of our public system, the spiteful sarcasms of our press and its reporters, that torrent of raw vulgarity which daily poured itself upon his name, that wholesale depreciation, distortion, and derision of his person and his life-aims, flung into the face of the very world around him, upon whose assistance alone he must rely for their realisation,—never could these calumnies extort from him an expression of ill-will; but only arouse that deep indignation wherewith he turned his back upon them. In this regard, let any one consult the few brief sentences in the *Nachlassband*, under the rubric: "Why I do not reply to the countless attacks upon my art-views and myself."—Once, upon one of his sojourns in the Austrian capital, some one had the bad taste to show him a vulgar and obscene caricature in a Viennese "Wit-sheet"; he cast a glance at it, and said: "No man should stoop to draw such things as *that*."

The instances of rank spoliation and outwittal, e.g. by eminent theatrical intendants who pursued the policy of performing his earlier works and handing him over no percentage of their ample 'takings,' while leaving in the cold his newer dramas sold with express stipulation for such a payment,—these meannesses succeeded, it is true, in rousing him to warmth; yet never did its manifestation betray a trace of petty, personal feeling, but always showed as the expression of a deep sense of *wounded justice*. "The world is taught how to respect the rights of every other kind of man; only the way in which it should treat a man of my sort can never be brought home to it, *because the case*

*presents itself too seldom*": such is what we read among the jottings of the *Nachlassband*, as a private reflection upon his experiences in this department of life. Gladly then did he withdraw from the vexations of our cities, staying no longer time in them than was urgently required by the occasion, for instance, of a performance of his works, for whose approximately correct rendering his aid was sought. On that side he knew the world too well; and preferred that it should come to visit him at Bayreuth, to seeking it out amid the pomp of its own capitals. This world it was, that helped to make him, in the later years of life, replace the clouds of his own fatherland by the sunshine of Italian skies.

But, to leave on one side those instances of lively wrath, or glowing indignation: the *patience*, the *gentleness*, and the *forbearance* of this great man have not, by a long way, been sufficiently confessed and emphasised. Wagner experienced much enthusiastic veneration and sacrificing friendship; but for certain, in the majority of such cases, no other man but *he* could have called it forth, and at like time it was mostly he himself that was the real creator of its intellectual or moral worth. How high above their own level he was able to lift the persons of his entourage, their talents and their sympathies, may be best seen by the many pitiful examples of backsliding into the common rut of "all-too-human" which have shown themselves, in a remarkable fashion, among highly-gifted men of his acquaintance so soon as this immediate personal stimulus surceased. With regard to other persons who were brought into contact with him, persons who in their judgment of men and things can never leave behind their ready-made recipes, and applied to his aims and thoughts the foot-rule of their own self-seeking narrowness: to these continuously he showed a patience and forbearance broad beyond all bounds.

(To be continued.)



## NOTES.

Upon the late Mr FERDINAND PRAEGER's "*Wagner as I knew him*" (Longmans, Green & Co., London) I would far rather have kept silence; for it is a most delicate matter, to review in these columns a work by so recently deceased a Member of our Society. The importance of such a biography, however, at least as far as England is concerned, rendering it incumbent upon me to analyse it, I think it will be better to discard for the nonce the editorial "we" and criticise in *propria persona*, thus relieving the Wagner Society of any shadow of endorsement of my views. For the reason just stated, I shall also be most happy to print in the next issue of *The Meister* any letters that may be sent by Members expressing opinions on this subject at variance with my own; only begging that, on account of the exiguity of this journal's space, such remarks may be couched as briefly as possible.

I have used the expression "as far as England is concerned," and hasten to explain my meaning. On the one hand, the Life of Wagner is very little known in this country at present, and there are but few among us in a position to judge for themselves as to the accuracy or otherwise of estimates of his character, or of statements of facts relating thereto; on the other, I cannot conceive a like importance being attached to this volume in Germany, where there are many still living who knew Richard Wagner far more intimately and for a longer period than did its author, and where the sources of much of the matter contained therein will be readily recognised.

This brings me to the question of Mr Praeger's claims: for it is upon them that is based much of the rejoicing in certain quarters of the press at the "revelations" of this book; and the verdict has already been given, in so many words: "If Wagner's *lifelong* friend can write *thus* about him, that master must indeed have been a contemptible man." It is our duty therefore to examine these claims, as formulated in the Preface: "an

intimacy, an uninterrupted friendship of close upon half a century during which early associations, ambitions, failures, successes, and their results were frankly discussed"; and again: "I believe I am the sole recipient of many of his early impressions and reminiscences, of his thoughts and ambitions in after-life." And thus we may read through the first third of the book under the impression that, at least from manhood onwards, the two men were frequently in one another's company; for fifty years of Wagner's life would run back to the year 1833, when he was just approaching his majority. But on page 119 we reach the following: "I have now arrived at the time when my own acquaintance with Richard Wagner began. It was in the beginning of the spring of 1843." We are puzzled, however, at finding no record of a meeting, and for the moment believe its omission to have been a *lapsus calami*. However, another third of the book slips by, and finally we come to page 219, where for the *first* time we are told that before Wagner's visit to London in 1855 the author "did not know him personally." This statement is corroborated by the first lines of Wagner's letter on page 222: "I enter into correspondence with you, my dear Praeger." Thus the half century is reduced to a possible 28 years. But if we examine farther, we find that from the other end also must be subtracted twelve years, as to which the author has "but little to tell," in fact only half a page of record of two or three brief meetings.

We thus have sixteen years of *active* friendship, but of even these the last fourteen are summed up in barely thirty pages, for the most part consisting of letters; and we are at last driven to the conclusion that the three and a half months of London life in 1855, and the two months at Zurich in 1857 are the only protracted periods as to which Mr Praeger can speak as an eye-witness. Nor does he seem to have been brought into close contact with those whom we

are accustomed to regard as Wagner's immediate circle, excepting for the accounts which August Roeckel furnished of the Dresden period. There is a singular dearth of reference even to Liszt, the genuine lifelong friend, although Wagner was writing to Liszt on an average once a fortnight whilst in Mr Praeger's company in London; and when Liszt is referred to, it is done in a manner that shows no excess of recognition: "Liszt was good and sheltered him, and interested himself so far as to go to the police official at Weimar" &c.; or that scarcely laudatory allusion on page 331.

It is important to bear this over-statement of claim in mind, in view of the many other inaccuracies which militate against the author's strength of memory. But how far back was memory taxed? Is the book built mainly upon *notes* of conversation, and incidents recorded at the time? Mr Praeger nowhere directly states so, and I can scarcely conceive it to have been the case, for there then could hardly have arisen such confusion as to the dates of this or that occurrence. Thus Chapter XXI., recording the visit to Zurich, is headed "1856," and the said visit is so repeatedly alluded to as falling in that year, that we cannot presuppose a misprint in this instance; moreover the Chapter opens with "a domestic picture of the creator of the 'Walkyrie,' whilst that work was actually in hand," whereas Liszt thanks Wagner on Aug. 1, '56 for the full score of that work. But it is impossible that the visit should have taken place until 1857, for Wagner was at Mornex in the summer of '56; he did not go to his "chalet" until the spring of '57; the offer of the "emperor of Brazil" reached him in the summer of '57; and finally he writes to Fischer in October '57, "I have had German visitors: Ed. Devrient, Praeger" &c.,—the accuracy of the date of this letter being established by the words: "I am now composing *Tristan und Isolde*." This involves a question also as to the correctness of the date of Wagner's letter to Mr Praeger on page 287, looking forward to the visit; for "a bit of the *Siegfried*" music is spoken of, and I cannot but think that "May 1856"

is incorrect, since I find Wagner writing to Liszt in July '56: "I hope I shall soon have the courage to begin my *Siegfried* at last," and in December of that year alluding to its inception, while in May '57 he is full of *Siegfried* again. The same remark applies to the letter on page 300 of "*Wagner as I knew him*," given as dating *after* the Zurich visit, "July 17th" and apparently 1857. In my belief, founded on internal evidence, this letter *was* sent in '57; but that is long before "the next" of October 1858, and the Zurich visit must have come between.—Now the force of these deductions lies herein: firstly that Mr Praeger's claim, advanced since Wagner's death, to have suggested the subject of *Tristan* for a music-drama is shown to have been quite out of *date*; secondly that no careful record can have been kept even of one of the most important events in the acquaintanceship of the two men, and therefore one can never feel quite certain how much besides has been left, *longo intervallo*, to imperfect reminiscence.—

While touching on this Zurich visit, I desire most strongly to protest against its concluding episode. Had there been any foundation for these "reproaches" and petty tittle-tattlings, it would have been a most cruel thing to revive them, after so many years of oblivion, with the full name of the lady accused, and pointedly to couple them with a "similar episode at Bordeaux." But to give such a "scandal" fresh breathing-room, and wind up, entirely regardless of the lady's feelings, with "I can testify that Wagner suffered severely from thoughtlessness"! The "scandal," however, was a base calumny. It is shown to have been such: first by Wagner's letter on page 299,—which together with its predecessor ought surely to have been considered as inviolably 'confidential,' and, given as they are, in fragmentary extracts, can only excite the curiosity of the prurient; secondly by the fact that both this lady and her husband remained Wagner's faithful friends until his death; thirdly by this lady's indignant denial, conveyed to me by herself, in a letter concerning the book under review; and fourthly by the

respect and honour of the highest circles in Germany, in which she is regarded as the type of all that is pure and womanly.—

Unfortunately the inaccuracies of this book well over into the quotations. I have already, in a contribution to the *Musical News* of April 22nd, pointed out how Mr Praeger takes a fragment of a sentence of Wagner's writings and leaves aloof all consideration of its context; drawing thus the most erroneous conclusions. But in some places he adds a 'gloss' between his inverted commas: thus on page 130, referring to August Roeckel, he inserts "unquestioned" before the word "talents," and adds "cast to the winds his own chances of worldly success. This companion of my gloom was Roeckel." Undoubtedly it was Roeckel; but this is tampering with quotation. Again, compare with the letter to Fischer of June 15 '55 (*Letters to Uhlig, Fischer &c.*, p. 401) "I need scarcely tell you that the representations of my friends who escorted me home," the interpolation given on page 254 "I need not tell you that it was only the entreaties of Ferdinand Praeger and those who accompanied me home." Further, on page 174 there stands: "In a sketch of these exciting days, written and published by Roeckel at my instigation he states that Wagner became aware that his friend Roeckel was to be taken prisoner" &c. Now upon reference to this sketch, which is none other than "*Sachsen's Erhebung*," I find Roeckel (p. 142 of *S.E.*) stating nothing of the kind, for he mentions no names at all!

This insertion of the name of Wagner without authority is carried to a remarkable extent in Chapter XV., dealing with the Dresden Insurrection. Thus on page 176 we have the "pitch-rings" incident, given as in Roeckel's book, *excepting* for the insertion of the name of Wagner; on page 181, "a witness who swore to the part actually played by Wagner during the rising," whereas the evidence actually sought and extorted is stated by Roeckel to have applied to nothing but the Prague friends of the latter; and, to omit other instances, I may finally select the crown-

ing 'gloss,' on pages 182-3, where we read "The official accusation of my friend" (i.e. Roeckel) "is before me, and as Richard Wagner is concerned, I will summarize the charge." This summary is condensed from that given on page 224 of Roeckel's book, with the important exception that Roeckel *does not once* mention Wagner's name in connection with his own trial; and, so far from that "letter from Richard Wagner" being instrumental in Roeckel's condemnation, Roeckel distinctly states that the authorities had discarded, as against himself, even the charge connected with the Prague incident.

Apart from interpolations, there are many other errors in this important chapter (XV.), and while relying upon Roeckel's *Sachsen's Erhebung* for almost the entire account of the Insurrection, Mr Praeger has on several points misread that author with whose work he should have been the most acquainted. I need only refer to page 182, where Roeckel is represented as "declining" to attempt an escape from prison; whereas, in fact, he was on *two* occasions (given here as one) upon the point of effecting it. Again, on page 183 Mr Praeger says that Wagner "was consulted regularly by the heads" of the provisional government, and on 185, referring to Heubner—one of these heads—and Bakunin, that "he was constantly with them"; whereas Heubner, in a letter to Dr Kohut dated Sep. '87, and given in Kohut's recently published "*Aus dem Zauberlande Polymnia's*," says: "I am not in a position to give you the desired information about Wagner. I did not move in the same political circle as he did, and—so far as my memory will carry back to that tempestuous time—I never saw or spoke to him excepting on *one* day, May 9th 1849, when Bakunin and myself, accompanied by our retreating forces, had set foot in Freiberg," i.e. some hours after the Dresden Insurrection was quelled. This letter also carries us one stage farther on Wagner's journey from Dresden to Weimar, and points to the conclusion that he could have told Mr Praeger but

little about the whole Insurrection; for otherwise the latter must have been curious to know, and eager to recount the method of his hero's departure from Dresden, and moreover would have understood Wagner's reference to Heubner and Bakunin contained in that letter to Edward Roeckel on page 188, which clearly shows what a minor rôle the Kapellmeister played in the revolt.

I have no space to discuss the unfounded charge against Glasenapp of making a "totally inaccurate" statement regarding Roeckel, nor to give my reasons for denying that Wagner "permitted almost an untruth to be inferred" anent his own share in the events of 1848-9; both points are dealt with in my communication to the *Musical News* above referred to. But passing over these and other specific objections, I hasten to a general estimate of the book.

Apart from the grave blemishes to which I have alluded, as examples proving that we cannot treat "*Wagner as I knew him*" as a firm basis for historical reliance; apart from the many instances of application of the magnifying glass to Wagner's faults—for—*Wer ist gut?*—and of judgment by that "Mrs Grundy"-ism which Wagner, on page 287, begged his friend to lay aside; apart from the contradictory estimates of character; apart from the countless errors in dates and 'proper names,' caused by want of careful revision: there is a certain charm about the unsophisticated manner of narration, the stray touch, here and there, of genuine pathos, and even the way in which the author clings lovingly to the belief that *he* was the friend *par excellence*, of one whose friendship was showered so widely as by scarcely another leader of men. But if we approach this volume expecting a view into the deeper chambers of Wagner's heart, we shall be wholly disappointed, excepting for the indications in those thirty letters from the master which lighten up the work like gems. Whenever the scanty fragments of conversation here related turn upon more solid matter, one is astonished to find that, "original thinker" as Wagner was, it was always Mr Praeger who got the best of the argument, and

one cannot smother the impression of an encounter between a schoolboy and his tutor. This is entirely due to the attention paid by the author to mere externals; and I cannot help thinking that occasionally the Bayreuth master played upon his friend a trick like that practised upon Minna, page 293.

Thus I come at last to the brightest feature in the whole account, namely the abundant tribute paid to Minna, first wife of Richard Wagner. For Mr Praeger's chivalrous defence of that poor woman whose homely mind so little fitted her for companionship with the brilliant genius, Richard Wagner, none of us can have anything but unqualified praise. Would that the same could be said of the allusions to Frau Cosima Wagner, that noble woman to whom the art-world owes so large a debt of gratitude!

In conclusion I sincerely regret that Mr Praeger's work was not published before his own decease, that thus we might have had many a doubt cleared up by free discussion. As it is: however ungracious a thing it may be, to criticise the work of a dead man, we must remember that its subject also is dead, and cannot now defend himself from friend or foe.

Wm. Ashton Ellis.

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We have received the following from Mr Henry Knight:—"A play by Percy Fitzgerald and the late W. G. Wills, entitled '*Vanderdecken*,' was produced by Mr Henry Irving at the Lyceum Theatre on June 8th, 1878. Its prominent feature was the powerful and picturesque impersonation of the ill-fated mariner by Mr Irving himself. In spite of its many beauties, this, the most modern version of the old legend was not popular; possibly Fitzball would have suited the public of 1878 much better.—Curiously enough, on reference to 'Henry Irving,' a Biographical Sketch by Henry Brereton, I find in the exhaustive list of parts undertaken by the now famous tragedian in his early days, that he played the parts of Lieutenant Mowdrey, and Toby Varnish, in that *Flying Dutchman* of Fitzball's!"

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